

~~(17/11/1841)~~
~~My dear John~~
~~I have been thinking much of you lately~~
~~and how much you have advanced~~
~~in the character of a young man~~
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~~in the character of a young man~~
while my faculties have been at best stationary & my attainments very slowly increasing

Yours have been rapidly growing upon me (perhaps over growing) And in the mean while it is very possible I may not have been sufficiently sensible of this And that neither you nor I may have at once known how to accommodate ourselves to the new relation in which we ^{were} gradually entering - Had we met just a year or two ago, it is very likely that we sh^d. have more fully appreciated each other. Or at least our sober judgment of each other would have been less disturbed by all kinds of personal feelings - While I make this general statement, I ought in justice to us both to add that I believe, after all, less inconvenience has arisen to us both from this state of things than is usual - And perhaps there has been great merit in us both, that this is the fact. On my part, I have for several years acted on this conviction, that the less frequently I interfered in any thing respecting you, the more usefully I might on an emergency interfere, and I believe you will on recollection find the occasions very few on which I appeared to take a concern even, in your welfare. I was willing to incur a suspicion of indifference rather than be reproached for obtrusion: But I have been amply rewarded for this, by finding that I never did interfere without succeeding and that on the few occasions which might have produced a rough collision between us I have never once been treated by you with incivility so that if I were maliciously bent on calling to mind an ^{affront} ~~affront~~ or cause of serious resentment I should not be able to find one. On the contrary every advance made by me, every offer to advise, to conciliate, has been received by you with very gratifying concession. The only thing I have been ~~afraid I had cause~~ ^{afraid I had cause} sorry I perceived (and which it is the object of this letter to put an end to, if possible,) is a sentiment, certainly of respect, but of respect mingled with - restraint; a want of cordiality; a want of confidence. And of that kindness which only ease & familiarity & confidence can inspire. In your letter to your father you speak of painful obligations to me - why this is the very phrase you would use to a tooth drawer! My dear John I wish you to forget altogether obligations, so predicated - Malevolent

I must add for I will be quite sincere with you & advise or advise & advise, that I hope
that in your unfavorable habits may occasion you to be so disposed the just expectations of your friends; but
I now write - you now exist - I can not without a great deal of pain - I can not without a great deal of pain
persons are always on the point of hating those they are painfully obliged to - And no man
can have a regard (ask me at least) for those whom ^{he} thinks of in connecting with painful
recollections. I began to fear that in the conversation to which you (rather indiscreetly I think)
alluded I must have been harsh & unfriendly in my manner beyond my intentions. I certainly
did think that on your decision that day depended in a great measure the happiness of
your life And I resolved to spare no means in ~~your~~ my power to gain access to your good sense
tho' your passions & in spite of your passions. I succeeded And in one sense I conferred an obligation
that is, I did you a great service; but still I can not think you owe me any thing for it, since my
service was wrought ^{by} no sacrifice or self denial; I required indeed giving you offence; but I relied
in your understanding afterwards, And even now I rely on your candour in rightly construing
what I then said. [By the bye I understand from your Mother that you supposed me to say a very harsh
thing indeed - I will not spoil a letter written as I ~~now~~ under my present feelings by repeating the words
or sentiment you supposed me to utter - I only deny altogether the intention so to exasperate myself
And I will explain the subject when I see you] But what I am entitled to is
that you sho^d nourish no unkind recollections of what was most kindly intended
me - It is not easy or possible either by remonstrance to others, or resolutions formally
taken ^{to ourselves} to work sudden changes in ~~our~~ sentiments; but ^{what} I wish from you is, that
you would forget you were ever a boy when I was a man; forget I had ever occasion (were it
called or uncalled for, were it well or ill employed) to advise you or assume that authority which
at a certain time of life, mere superiority of years, without any other superiority whatever, partly
entitles a man to. We may now be upon terms of equality - as I, for instance, am with
Mr Pitt - ~~and with this state of equality~~ - I say terms of equality - Asks that there sho^d be (what
there never can be) with our associates, an equality in the various talents or attainments, men are capable
of & which are infinitely varied. You possess already talents which I never possessed & for which
I envy you And I do not ~~hesitate~~ hesitate to declare to you, as well as to others, that it depends
only on yourself to be in all respects a much superior man to me. I have already wasted &
my best years And shall never regain what I have lost. At your years I was much inferior to you
in many respects, tho' I am sensible I gave a promise then, to my acquaintances, which I have ⁺

that you will soon be satiated with ~~mere~~ the mere 'elegances of polite literature which will no more qualify a man for the duties & business of life than macarons will fatten him - I certainly do not think that these ought to be neglected - you have the talent of so very pleasantly applying your familiarity with them; the only thing I fear is that you may enervate your mind by accustoming yourself to exert it only on occasions when the source is immediately pleasing - It is absolutely necessary to acquire ~~from~~ the habit of fixing the attention sedulously & as closely on objects that give no pleasure whatever - neither addressing the imagination nor the feelings - I know not why I have digressed to this subject I meant to write merely about ourselves & the relation I wish to subsist between us, but I am not sorry that I have (tho' unpremeditatedly) expressed my opinion on a subject of so much more real

you, the more useful

occasions use

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than apparent importance - I have connected it certainly with the most interesting subject on which I ever write to you; and it is, after all, the counsel most important to your future happiness which I believe myself competent to give you - I have been reading over my letter. It is written in a more grave & earnest tone than I could have wished, but the subject is not light or sportive, & tho' it is not my wish to counter to the intention of my letter to assume the air of an adviser yet I have in spite of myself done so now. However, you know the slaves of Rome were manumitted by a blow; and it is in consistency with this custom that I should formally disclaim all future influence over you beyond the suggestions of mere friendship. And in so doing heap counsel & admonition upon you. The blow given to a freedman certainly gave no pain and I hope this letter of counsel will therefore not be unacceptable; At least give me credit for the sincerity with which I assure you I am your friend H. C. Robison